

Wildlands Trust Recognizes Generous Duxbury Family

The following article appeared in the spring 2002 issue of Wildlands News.

In 1627, Pilgrim Elder William Brewster began acquiring land in Duxbury as one of the first settlers of that town. In 1631 he added a 20-acre parcel acquired from Francis Eaton. Brewster built the family home on his land in 1634. Now, a 19-acre portion of his farmstead has been placed in a permanent conservation restriction with The Wildlands Trust thanks to the Kelso family of Duxbury.

This land is located on Standish Shore in Duxbury, and includes an extensive swath of low uplands, wooded wetlands, and saltmarsh on the south end of the Eagle's Nest Creek marshes. This conservation restriction protects the outstanding scenic vista of the marshes. It adds to the protection of the water quality in the creek, which provides excellent waterfowl habitat. A vernal pool in the woods is a habitat for frogs and salamanders. The shrubby woodlands give cover to resident and wandering deer, coyote, fox, and great horned owl, among other species. The land abuts the Brewster Woods preserve now owned by The Wildlands Trust, which was donated by Mary Louise and David Mittell in 1998.

According to Mrs. Dorothy "Ducky" Kelso, placing the land in a permanent restriction is her "faith in the future." She and her husband Jim moved to the area 46 years ago. "Jim always felt very strongly that this land should never be built on."

Pictures taken from the Standish Monument of this area around the beginning of the 20th century show open land, which in years past was cleared for grazing cattle or sheep and for the use of the popular Standish Shore resort. Attempts to develop the land in 1871, 1939, and 1959 fortunately never got off the ground. Remnants still remain of the ancient trail across the property connecting Brewster's farm and the Myles Standish farm to the Duxbury meetinghouse.

Jim and Ducky's son Tony lives adjacent to the restricted property. He described the reasons that the family – he and his siblings as trustees – put this

beautiful land into permanent conservation: "First, we wanted to honor our parents and their commitment to saving this land. Second, in the face of the development pressure here in Duxbury and on the South Shore, we wanted to make a contribution to conservation, a statement of our family's values that would perhaps serve as an example to others. Third, we wanted to have assurance that these woods and fields would always be here, that our children would not have to face the question of selling the land."

According to Ducky Kelso,

"Now we get so much pleasure from seeing our grandkids learning about nature so early in their lives." Tony goes on, "This is a living classroom for our children, a place where they can learn the difference between a pine and an oak, a place to see owls."

The Kelso Conservation Restriction protects the character of a seaside community, a historic landscape, and the quality of our coastal ecosystem. We are grateful to the Kelso family for their vision and for their generosity.